

## Chris O'Brien

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**From:** Sneesby, Sandra <sluzzisneesby@ccri.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 5, 2021 1:44 PM  
**To:** House Finance Committee  
**Subject:** In Support of RI Promise (Article 1 Sec 15 and 2021 H 5524)

Dear Chairman Abney and member of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Sandra Luzzi Sneesby. I am a Professor of Communication and Film Media at the Community College of Rhode Island. I have been at the college for 14 years as a full-time instructor and have served in various capacities on college initiatives and committees.

Having been a first-generation college student, I understand the extraordinary challenges that our students bring with them as they enter our college. The apprehension, confusion, and financial considerations inherent in starting a college career can be magnified for students especially when they may not have enough money to pay for basic living expenses and work multiple jobs in addition to attending classes. This puts additional pressure and time constraints under which our students must complete their work.

I see our students every day and work closely with them. They come to us with dreams, and a belief in the promise of America that hard work and education can open doors to a successful career and a good life. Affordability should not be a barrier to realizing their goals.

Once upon a time, my grandparents were promised an 8th-grade education, then my parents a 12th-grade education. Now, a high school education may not be enough for people to succeed. As workplace requirements change, so does the need for our society to educate our citizens. The industrial revolution has been replaced by a technological revolution that introduces different ways of working, and so our state and our nation must reset to this new reality.

In teaching Promise students in the classroom, I see and hear how much this program means to them, and how hard they work to get the required GPA and maintain the credit load. I meet with them outside of class, helping them to navigate not only coursework, but how to manage their time, find internships, get involved in experiential learning, and network, and prepare themselves for success after college. As a faculty member, I want nothing else but to see our students succeed and build a better life for themselves.

The RI Promise program guarantees that those with few resources have a fighting chance. Many of our students who have come to our college are eligible for Pell grants, but in the past, they did not even inquire about enrolling, assuming they could not afford it. Now, more Pell grant eligible students are applying in addition to those whose education must be covered with the last dollar Promise program.

College enrollments in the Northeast have been on the decline, and that includes CCRI. The Promise program opens the doors wider for more people to benefit from what CCRI has to offer. RI Promise gives the opportunity of higher education to everyone no matter their circumstances. As more and more people take advantage of this opportunity, we will all see the dividends of our investment: enriched lives and a stronger economy. I urge the Committee to recommend the passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,